

Lesson 13 **THE LAW OF GOD (I)**

13.1 **The Place of the Law**

13.1.1 The **Origin** of the Law

The substance of the ten commandments was already given to Adam in paradise, and formed for him the demands of the covenant in which he was placed. Worship and thank-offering were also present in paradise; the sacrifice or offering for transgression appears after the fall. The essential demand of the law has always been faith, trust and obedience. The Lord confirms His gifts and promises in the way of faith.

13.1.2 **Additions** to the Law

The summary of the will of God is given in the ten commandments, written on two tables of stone, and placed in the ark of God, Exodus 25:21. The ten commandments are also called the ten words, the words of the covenant, the testimony, and the testimony of the covenant. After the deliverance of His people, the LORD also instituted the ceremonies and symbols of the law. The testimony sets out the will of God; the ceremonies open the way for reconciliation when God's will was transgressed. In their transgressions, the LORD sought to lead His people to the sacrifices; however, He always sought a sacrifice that was offered sincerely, from the heart, Psalm 51:16; Isaiah 1:12f; Hosea 6:6.

13.1.3 The **Change** in the Law

With the coming of Christ, the ceremonies and symbols are abolished, since we now have their fulfilment in Christ. The old way

of reconciliation and access has been replaced by a new and better way, Hebrews 10:20. The shadows have been fulfilled, and therefore we no longer need to perform them, Colossians 2:8f; Galatians 4:1-11. Meanwhile, we still have the truth and substance of them with us in the Word of God. We see how they point to Christ and His sacrifice.

Scripture gives several reasons why the LORD gave His people such a detailed and intricate law:

- a. to point out transgression, Romans 4:15, 5:13, 20; 7:7
- b. to check transgressions, Galatians 3:19
- c. to forgive transgressions, Hebrews 9:7
- d. to lead to Christ, Galatians 3:19, 23-26
- e. to confirm the promises, Galatians 3:17
- f. to show the way of thankfulness, obedience and holiness, Psalm 119
- g. to promote the civil order, 1 Timothy 1:8-11
- h. to reveal God's greatness, justice, goodness and mercy, Psalm 19:7f

13.1.4 The Law **Today**

The Ten Words must be maintained in Christ's Church as the rule of thankfulness for our life. The way of access or reconciliation is now found in Christ; but in Christ, we must die to sins of the past and walk in new obedience. Every commandment leads us to the summary of the law, Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10.

13.2 The Structure of the Law

The different commandments are divided into two tables, the first dealing with our relationship to God, the second to our neighbour. The law calls for love for:

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| 1. God's Person | 6. our neighbour's life |
| 2. God's service | 7. our neighbour's wife |
| 3. God's Name | 8. our neighbour's goods |
| 4. God's day of rest | 9. our neighbour's name |
| 5. God's representative | 10. all belonging to our neighbour |

The law of God is one and cannot be divided. Whoever sins against one command sins against them all, James 2:10. Yet the LORD treats some sins with greater punishments than others, see Lord's Day 36.

Exercises Lesson 13

I. **Reference Passages**

Study and Review: Belgic Confession, Article 24, 25, 26.
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 2, 32, 33,
34, 44.
Canons of Dort, Chapter III/IV. 5, 6, 17.

II. **Review Questions**

1. What is all included in the term **law of God**?
2. What is the essential demand of the law? What is the summary of the law?
3. Why were the ceremonies of the law abolished? What does this mean for our church services today?
4. If the law is fulfilled in Christ, what happens to the covenant?
5. In what way do the ten commandments still apply today?
6. What do we mean by the term **two tables** of the law?

III. **Extra Questions**

1. What factors show the special place of the ten commandments in God's revelation? See Article 3, Belgic Confession.
2. Which events surrounding the giving of the law showed that we were not able to keep it?

3. How were sins forgiven in the Old Testament? Was faith required for forgiveness?